Cotswold Seeds Ltd
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Sowing & Growing: Maincrop / Hardy Turnip



Maincrop turnip *(brassica rapa)* are one of the most winter hardy forage brassica species, commonly also known as hardy turnip. They allow livestock, usually sheep or cattle to be grazed later into the winter or early into the spring. Other less winter hardy species may be affected by frost, causing them to go soft and spoil in the ground.

The best yield will be found on good medium soils. As a very winter hardy brassica, this allows for late grazing and generally yields a third more than stubble turnips.

When to Sow: Hardy turnips should be sown by June at the latest. This species takes longer to establish and bulb up than the shorter term species like stubble turnip or forage rape, so at least 20 weeks should be allowed from sowing to grazing.

Sowing Rate: 1.5 - 2 kg per acre - 2.5 - 5 kg per ha.

Robust rates should be used if broadcasting the seed and lower rates can be used if drilling.

Preparation: A fine, firm seedbed is required with no soil compaction problems. Weeds can be an issue for some growers, especially for crops following grass leys. In this case there is an option to use the stale seedbed technique before sowing. This means working the ground then leaving the weeds to germinate before then being sprayed off.

Sowing: Root crops (except fodder beet) can be drilled or broadcast into a fine, firm seedbed.
If a root crop is to follow a grass ley, glyphosate can be applied to the grass prior to mowing. Once grass is removed, seed can be drilled into its stubble and can establish quickly unhindered by weeds.

A good dose of slurry or FYM should be applied before sowing if possible, along with a fertiliser application plan based around 70 kg N and 50 kg each of P & K per ha.

Management: Strip grazing will utilise the crop as efficiently as possible.

Electric fencing allows the crop to be fed at a controlled rate and should be long enough to give all stock access to the crop face. By doing this there is also less wastage through trampling. Ideally, a grass runback should be provided for animals to lie on.

Typical hardy turnip yields are around 6t DM/ha with a crude protein of 9% and a D-Value of 80.

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